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AUTHOR Costar, James W.
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ABSTRACT

This guide to improving middle school guidance programs is based on two premises: (1) that the primary goal of the guidance program is to help students find meaning in their lives, and by this means, find relevancy in what schools have to offer them; and (2) that this sense of relevancy is accompanied by higher motivation to learn, and as a consequence, greater achievement. Discrepancies that exist between what educators believe about good developmental guidance programs and what is typical in secondary schools are discussed, and widely accepted concepts about administration of effective guidance programs are described. Seven operational objectives of guidance programs are listed, and the services (pupil-inventory, information, counseling, placement, follow-up needs assessment) needed to reach these objectives are described. Components of designing an effective guidance program are presented, including revitalizing the guidance program, assessing pupil needs, agreeing on goals and priorities, program needs assessment, and implementing the program. The roles of the principal and middle school counselor are described. Models for middle school guidance programs, including the teacher-advisor approach are presented. The role of the classroom teacher in the guidance program is described. The teacher-advisor guidance program, which is intended to provide greater emphasis upon the guidance function of the school through a well-defined structure for group guidance activities which can be specifically defined, assigned, and evaluated, is discussed in some detail. Preparation of teachers for guidance work is described. Selected references are listed. (ABL)

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IMPROVING YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM

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MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATORS

FOCUS ON IMPROVING YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM

by

James W. Costar,
Professor Emeritus
Educational Administration
Michigan State University

Project Editor
Louis G. Romano
College of Education
Michigan State University

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James W. Costar was formerly a Middle School counselor and director of guidance in Canton Public Schools, South Dakota. After completing his doctorate at Michigan State University he remained there as a counselor in the Counseling Center and assistant professor in the Department of Guidance and Counseling. Eventually he served as chairman of the department.

Dr. Costar is well known for his many publications. **Guidance Services in the Secondary School** and **Guidance Services in the Elementary School** are two of his many publications.

A few of his honors include Outstanding Counselor Educator, Michigan State University College of Education Alumni Distinguished Faculty, and Distinguished Service Award for Michigan School Counselors Association.

Dr. Costar has served as a consultant to more than 100 school districts throughout the United States and foreign countries including Holland, Canada, Mexico, Taiwan, Belgium and others.

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Michigan Association of Middle School Educators
Michigan State University, College of Education
419 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, Michigan 48824

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Focus On
Improving Your Middle School Guidance Program

Few disagree with the notion that the primary function of any school is to help children learn and that the core of this activity is the instructional program, including the classroom teacher. In recent years teachers have focused much of their attention directly upon the pupil, - the learner, - looking for more effective ways to enhance the learning process; and yet, there still appears to be a growing reluctance of young people to learn. The most common manifestation of this attitude is poor school attendance, something which has now become almost epidemic. Not only do many students continue to leave school permanently at the earliest possible age, but among middle school students, there is an increasing number who absence themselves for one day or one week at a time. They say school is boring.

Much time and energy has been devoted by all educators in attempts to overcome this growing problem. The middle school movement itself is, in part, an effort to create an atmosphere conducive to better learning. New classes and class materials have been developed, new ways of grouping pupils devised, instructional techniques were modified, the length of class periods and the school year changed. And yet, most of what has been tried seems to have done little more than to help students tolerate boredom rather than eliminate the cause of it.

Shocking as the fact may be, school work still does not seem relevant to most young people in spite of monumental efforts made in the 1960's and 70's. Gradually, educators at the K-12 levels have come to realize that a large part of "relevancy" is in the minds of students and that teachers cannot make things seem relevant to young people who do not have sufficient insight into their own present and future needs. Educational relevancy requires considerable personal planning; and in order to do this well students must first know "who they are" by coming to understand what things interest them the most, what aptitudes and skills they possess, and which direction in their life will be most profitable and satisfying for them. Helping them acquire these understandings is an important part of the guidance function of the middle school.

Thus, the primary goal of the middle school guidance program is to help students find meaning in their lives; and by this means, find relevancy in what schools have to offer them. A sense of relevancy is accompanied by higher motivation to learn and, as a

consequence, greater achievement. Good teachers have always known this, and continually seek more effective ways of making the subject they teach meaningful to their students. An effective developmental guidance program helps them accomplish this important task.

Clarifying The Purpose

In the beginning, considerable confusion regarding the goals and structure of middle school guidance programs existed among those who were in charge of them. Fully aware of their responsibility to assist each pupil "bridge the gap" between childhood and adolescence -- between elementary school and high school -- middle school staffs found it unwise to fully adopt the design of guidance programs at either of the other two levels. Nevertheless, because of insufficient research on and practical experience with middle school guidance, many did look to crisis-oriented high school programs for certain practices which were either adapted for the middle school or adopted without change. Often it was a serious mistake. Not only did such practices simply perpetuate some high school mistakes of the past but, in addition, failed to give sufficient consideration to the unique characteristics of 11-14 year-old children for whom the middle school was designed, not the least of which were the developmental needs of these emerging adolescents.

At the juncture between elementary school and high school, the middle school is in a position to combine the best of elementary school guidance (with its emphasis upon continuous developmental teacher-oriented activities) and the strengths of high school programs (characterized by highly trained guidance specialists who emphasize counseling with individuals and in small groups). Such combinations are more easily brought in line with the fundamental purpose of the middle school and have as their primary basis: 1) a developmental approach which stresses **prevention** of learning difficulties rather than **treatment** of disabling conditions, and 2) an organizational structure in which the classroom teacher is the focal point of guidance services for both pupils and their parents. Both points are supported in a **Policy and Position Paper on Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs** adopted by the Michigan State Board of Education in 1987.

The Developmental Approach To Guidance

There are those who have advocated for years that more time and money be spent on the preventive aspects of guidance, never quite realizing that although **developmental** guidance is preventive, prevention alone does not necessarily result in human development. In fact, there are times in our schools when efforts at prevention may actually inhibit pupil development -- e.g., student conduct regulations, required courses and rigidly scheduled activities. Regretfully, efforts to prevent problems from developing often prevent pupils from developing.

At the present time, there are several areas where discrepancies exist between what educators believe about good developmental guidance programs and what is typical in our secondary schools. For instance, it is commonly believed that:

1. **Developmental guidance programs are integrated with the total school program,** but most programs still operate, for the most part, as a separate department of the school consisting only of counselors.
2. **Developmental guidance programs provide every staff member with a guidance function to perform,** but the emphasis today is on the work of counselors. It is a common misconception in our secondary schools that the counselors **are** the guidance program.
3. **Developmental guidance programs stress self-understanding by the learner,** but our guidance activities center more often around the staff's understanding of pupils.
4. **Developmental guidance programs are long-term and continuous from the time children enter school until they leave,** but only little attention is given to the maintenance of strong programs at the middle and elementary school levels. Instead, help is directed to the high school where the need is greatest because problems are often more severe.
5. **Developmental guidance programs help students learn how to make wise decisions for themselves,** but insufficient effort is being made to help students develop in all areas needed for wise decision-making.
6. **Developmental guidance programs focus on preparation and planning,** but in many middle schools there is still little more than talk about collaborating with parents in helping children develop a sense of direction in their lives. Most programs are reactive (crisis oriented) rather than proactive (planned).

7. **Developmental guidance programs exist for all children,** but the limited resources available are usually directed more toward the needs of children with serious problems than those with normal developmental concerns.

8. **Developmental guidance programs enhance the total development of children,** but it has become popular to emphasize personal and social development while neglecting academic-vocational development.

Administrative Concepts

The term **guidance** has been used to describe many different processes, philosophies, and activities. Since it is often interpreted so loosely, it has given rise to many distinct formats in middle schools. However, there are a few widely accepted concepts related to the administration of an effective guidance program.

A Guidance Program is a Program of Services

Many definitions of guidance can be found in the related literature. Most of them refer to it as a process or as an activity which is concerned with the total development of students. This would seem to be the goal of all educational experiences. The difference then between guidance and the instructional function of the school is not always easy to discern -- depending, to a large extent, upon the goal associated with an activity, i.e., the reason it is being performed.

For most it is easier to envision the guidance program as a program of services -- services which are easily defined, administered and evaluated. It is then possible to describe a guidance program as those services specifically designed to facilitate the growth and development of pupils. A description of each guidance service will be found later in this booklet.

Guidance Services Are Facilitating Services

Frequently, the guidance program is thought of as something apart from the instructional and administrative functions of the school. As such it would be of doubtful merit. The primary role that a program of guidance services must play is that of making the instructional function more efficient and effective; i.e., facilitating the primary function of the school, helping children learn.

Guidance Services Are Not An Added Activity

Expanding guidance services should not be thought of as just an added responsibility, but rather, as a change in priorities. If such

a change is made, it should be judged on this basis: "Will this change make our efforts more meaningful to the individuals in my room?" It then becomes a question of which of the many things being done do the most to enhance the total development of every child?

Guidance Services Are Primarily Preventive In Nature

One important aspect of an effective guidance program is the prevention of problems before they arise. Finding and helping youngsters remove minor obstacles to their development before they create major problems is a high priority objective in all guidance programs. This does not mean that guidance workers in such programs avoid problems of severe maladjustment in some students; but rather, such cases become fewer in number and are handled primarily by other means inside or outside the school system, e.g., special education or community agencies.

Guidance Services Need Specialized Personnel

In spite of the unique position and qualifications for offering guidance services to their pupils held by classroom teachers, it is apparent that highly trained guidance specialists are also necessary. Staff members, including counselors, social workers, nurses, and psychologists, are always needed to provide the kind of remedial or therapeutic aid for some pupils which is beyond the training, experience or time allocation of a typical teacher.

Guidance Programs Require Coordination

If all pupils are to have an equal opportunity to use available guidance services and if such services are to be administered in an efficient manner, continuous coordination of the guidance activities of all persons within the school is necessary. In addition, the guidance program in each building must be carefully articulated on a system-wide basis with those in other elementary, middle and senior high schools as well as with agencies and referral persons outside the system.

The Guidance Services

Objectives

Many different organizational patterns are used in providing guidance services in middle schools. Because of differences from school to school in available resources, levels of staff development and need priorities of students, differences in program organization should be expected. However, the structures of most guidance programs reflect a desire to attain seven widely accepted operational objectives:

1. To collect from and interpret to all individual pupils personal data which will help them better understand themselves and, thus, to make more valid decisions related to personal growth and development,
2. To furnish to and interpret for pupils and their parents certain kinds of personal, social, educational and vocational information useful in making long-range plans,
3. To provide individuals and groups of students counseling assistance in acquiring insights and drawing conclusions,
4. To analyze and, when necessary, alter the home, school and community environment of pupils in order to improve their personal, social and academic adjustment,
5. To aide individual students in planning for and adjusting to post-school life,
6. To continually assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the guidance services offered for students and their parents,
7. And finally, to make certain that for every child there is an adult in the school who know him or her well and carefully monitors that child's progress.

In order to reach these objectives, the following guidance services are provided.

Pupil-Inventory Service

The Pupil-Inventory Service is concerned with a careful and systematic study of each student in order to personalize his or her educational program as much as possible. It includes all the tools and techniques used to obtain various types of information about every pupil. Devices such as questionnaires, autobiographies, sociograms, standardized tests, anecdotes and procedures for recording and interpreting pupil data make up the major part of this aspect of a guidance program.

Information Service

The **Information Service** is composed of three very closely related areas. Each consists of a different type of information students need for personal growth, including educational, vocational, and personal-social information. Vocational information outlines the world of work; educational information describes educational programs inside and outside the school while personal-social information is that which will help children in understanding their own behavior and that of their peers and parents.

Counseling Service

The **Counseling Service** consists of competent personnel, facilities and time provided so that every pupil will have help in analyzing his or her concerns or plans for the future as the need arises. Because it is based on the notion that the counseling process is an individualized activity, this service emphasizes conversations with students on a one-to-one basis and in small homogeneous groups.

Placement Service

The **Placement Service** is an integral part of the total guidance program and includes both educational and vocational placement. Since few middle school children hold jobs, even on a part-time basis, vocational placement activities are seldom found at this level except on an informal basis. Educational placement gets more attention. It includes efforts made by the staff to place students in those classes of greatest benefit to them and where the teaching techniques used match their unique cognitive styles.

Follow-Up Needs Assessment Service

The **Follow-Up Service** is concerned with problems, successes, failures and suggestions of pupils after they have graduated or moved to a new grade level. Since the vast majority of middle school pupils go directly to the high school, formalized follow-up studies are conducted less often than those of high school graduates and dropouts. Very often the only follow-up of a pupil's stay in the middle school is that done by individual classroom teachers keeping in touch informally with their former students. This service, however, should not be overlooked. A follow-up of former middle school students now in the high school can prove extremely helpful to the staff in improving educational programs for future students.

The accountability movement in education, with its emphasis upon management by objectives, has made the continual assessment of the needs of students an essential aspect of providing relevant educational programs and services for them. Assessment of the needs of the guidance program itself is also an important element in an effective follow-up service and is addressed more fully in the following section.

Designing An Effective Guidance Program

Current stress upon "accountability" in education is having a significant impact upon guidance programs at the middle school level. Widespread criticism of junior high school counseling has given impetus to efforts at developing new approaches to guidance services for pre-teenage pupils. These, in turn, have had a strong influence on the middle school movement itself.

Because of the uniqueness of their philosophy and their emphasis upon the social and psychological aspects of learning, middle schools have provided fertile ground for the development of new and more effective delivery systems for counseling and guidance, including the teacher-advisor concept mentioned earlier. Although the guidance program has always had an important role to play in helping middle school students reach the maximum of their potential as human beings, the relative importance of this function has increased dramatically during the past few years. As a result, middle schools have assumed a leadership role in the design of many new aspects of this important area of education.

Revitalizing the Guidance Program

The press for better management in our nation's schools has caused both parents and educators to give more attention to their guidance programs. Many have concluded that it is the most neglected school program. For those who wish to ensure that the guidance services of their school will adequately meet the needs of the pupils they serve, the first question often asked is: Which needs of students should our schools try to meet? Followed by: What priority should be given to each need?

To the degree to which the goals and objectives of the school already reflect the developmental needs of its pupils, guidance services have only to facilitate their attainment. In that sense, the guidance program is, as it should be, an integral part of the total school effort. Programs with objectives that are not consistent with the general philosophy and goals of the school are sooner or later judged to be a "fifth wheel" and are either abandoned or severely restricted during periods of economic crisis. Thus, the first and most important step in revitalizing a guidance program is to assess the relative strength of the physical, psychological, social, and intellectual needs of the students being served in order to determine the highest and lowest priorities among them. With this information about the basic needs of their students the staff can more easily determine which services should receive the greatest emphasis (strongest needs) and from which human and financial resources can be diverted (weakest needs) if necessary.

Assessing Pupil Needs

It is not always essential to survey the entire student body. Most teachers already have a fairly accurate perception of the needs of the pupils in their classes. A ten percent sample of students may be all that is needed to confirm beliefs already held by the staff or to indicate that a more extensive assessment should be made in a specific area. Some find it helpful to ask the teachers in a more systematic way what the priorities should be, and many means have been developed for collecting such data, the two most common being personal interviews and written questionnaires. Neither need be elaborate nor time consuming to be helpful. With a few modifications the student questionnaire can be used with parents and teachers to assess their perceptions of pupil needs.

Agreeing on Goals and Priorities

Having collected the needs assessment data, the next step is to translate this information into a set of understandable goals for the guidance program, acceptable to the professional staff as well as students and parents. Typically there will only be seven or eight broad goals similar to those found later in this booklet. A means can then be easily devised for the staff, school board and parents to establish a system of priorities by which resources will be assigned to and time allocated for each of them. A form developed for this task can be found in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

A Statement of Tentative Goals for the Guidance Program

Students should be assisted in:

	RANK 1 High 7 Low	RATE See Scale Below
1. Attaining an educational experience relevant to their needs and to the full limit of their interests and potentialities.		
2. Acquiring effective techniques in working with others, both peers, and adults.		
3. Becoming acquainted with ways of providing a livelihood, obtaining employment and succeeding in it.		
4. Developing an ability to assume civic responsibility, including acceptance of self and others.		
5. Developing fundamental behavior patterns conducive to good physical, mental and social health.		
6. Developing effective ways of using leisure time.		
7. Developing better self-understanding, self-direction and self-discipline.		

Program Needs Assessment

To conduct a current needs assessment of the guidance program, rate each of the above goals on the following scale. Then calculate the average score for each goal. The lowest scores tell you where there is much to be done. The highest (13-14-15) tell you where you might get the resources and time to make improvements.

Extremely poor	Poor	Fair but needs improvement	OK Leave as is	Too much being done
1-2-3	4-5-6	7-8-9	10-11-12	13-14-15

Implementing the Program

A serious effort to improve the guidance program of any school can be both costly and time-consuming; however, neither is rarely the case. Much is probably already being done well though the staff is not fully aware of it. Even so, it is hard to find a guidance program that cannot be improved if the staff is willing to make the effort. The following is a list of principles which are sufficiently valid for all guidance programs to serve as a basis for developing a sound administrative guidance structure in any middle school.

1. Guidance services, in some form, are in all schools though they may not be labeled as such.
2. Every guidance program must be individually tailored to fit the unique characteristics of the students and staff of the the school in which it operates.
3. Every staff member has a role to play in providing guidance services to pupils and their parents.
4. The effectiveness of the guidance program increases as fast as the development of the staff.
5. A guidance program develops to the extent that the school administration and Board encourages and supports it.
6. An effective guidance program requires trained leadership.
7. The guidance program must be evaluated against its ability to facilitate the work of both teachers and administrators.

Role of the Principal

Probably the most important person in the development of a good guidance program is the building principal. Without strong and continuous leadership from the principal little can be accomplished for it if he or she who is ultimately responsible for all programs in the building, guidance services being no exception.

In the past, many building principals have ignored their role in the development of guidance services or, at least, have turned over that responsibility to the counselor. Although counselors can be of considerable help in organizing, administering and evaluating guidance services, principals cannot reassign these responsibilities entirely. It is through active personal participation by the principal that the staff becomes confident the priorities which have been established will be carried out and that it will be worthwhile for them

to spend time and energy in an effort to improve the counseling and guidance program. Leadership by the principal is especially important in the following areas:

1. Establishing a written philosophy and related goals for the guidance program which are consistent with the overall philosophy and goals of the school.
2. Obtaining financial support for guidance staff and services.
3. Assigning competent and dedicated staff.
4. Acquiring suitable facilities, equipment and materials.
5. Providing certain counseling and guidance services for which he or she is personally most qualified.
6. Encouraging staff participation in regular in-service training for guidance activities.
7. Supporting continuous evaluation of the guidance program and related support services in the community.

Role of the Middle School Counselor

The most unique and important aspect of the guidance program is the counseling service. Because all guidance services, to be truly effective, must ultimately be tailored to meet the individual needs of each pupil, conversations on a one-to-one basis are essential. These require time set aside for talks with individual students, locations where uninterrupted discussions can be held in an atmosphere conducive to thinking, and adults with special skills who are able to assist counselees analyze their perceptions, attitudes, and feelings -- particularly as they relate to decision-making and evolving valid plans for their own development. This is the main work of the counselor.

The middle school counselor is a staff member with specialized knowledge and ability who provides assistance to students in making decisions that ensure an orderly progression through the various stages of their personal growth. At certain periods in the life of all children they must accomplish corresponding **developmental tasks** in order to proceed to the next level of their total development: mental, physical, social, and vocational. Arriving at valid insights required for successful accomplishment of each task requires that children and their parents carefully identify, and weigh for their relative importance, the various factors associated with choices to be made. The school counselor possesses those skills and personal

qualities which facilitate this decision-making process and spends the major portion of his or her time each day conferring with individual pupils about their unique concerns.

As is pointed out in a later section devoted to the guidance responsibilities of classroom teachers, counselors are not the only ones in the middle school who help students make plans and resolve problems or concerns. The level of skill that is needed depends upon the complexity of the problem. Teachers, administrators, secretaries, aides, peers or friends and parents may also help. However, no guidance program can be expected to reach its full potential without the services of a fully trained counselor.

Though all school counselors are expected to have many of the same basic skills, middle school counselors do have certain characteristcs and abilities which make them especially adept at working with pre-adolescent youth. Just as guidance programs at the elementary, middle and high school levels all must vary somewhat in their emphasis in order to reflect the gradually changing needs of growing children, so must the role and function of the school counselor vary at each level. Variations in emphasis among the following primary responsibilities of school counselors will be found from school to school as well as grade level to grade level.

1. **Collecting Data About Pupils** (gathering, analyzing, and recording information about students which is helpful to teachers, administrators, parents, and guidance specialists).
2. **Consulting with Teachers, Administrators and Other Specialists** (discussing normal growth and development problems as well as problems of special concern to individual pupils).
3. **Collaborating with Parents** (reviewing, from time to time, the long-range educational plans for their child and assisting them with problems of immediate concern to them).
4. **Counseling with Pupils** (meeting with pupils, both individually and in groups in order to provide additional help to those who need the assistance of a staff member with more time and training for counseling than the typical classroom teacher and to make referrals both within and outside the school system).
5. **Conducting Research Studies Related to the Guidance Program** (collecting and analyzing data describing the nature of the student body and the community served by the school that is useful in evaluating the degree to which the

total school program meets the needs of all pupils).

6. **Coordinating All Guidance Services Available to Pupils in the School** (making all services within the school and community easily accessible to every pupil who can profit from them).

Increasing the participation of teachers in the guidance program as described in a later section can have a significant effect on the role of the counselor. Where teachers are active guidance workers there is greater need for coordination, supervision and provision of in-service training by certified counselors. One can also expect that the number of referrals from the teaching staff will increase.

Models for Middle School Guidance Programs

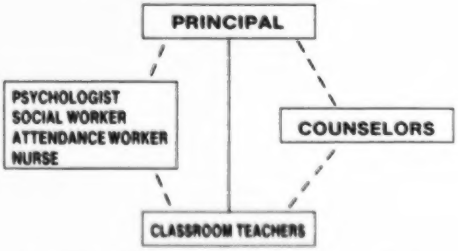
When considering a suitable structure for delivery of guidance services to middle school youth, thought must first be given to the other student services available within the school district. Because of the relatively small number of pupils needing the help of a school psychologist, social worker, hearing and speech therapist, nurse or attendance worker, these pupil personnel specialists ordinarily spend only part of their time in a single building, and are usually housed in a more central location within the district. It is when the entire specialist team is joined with teachers and administrators that the guidance function of the school is carried out most effectively.

Of course, the simplest and oldest program arrangement is when the principal and teachers alone provide whatever guidance services they can through the curriculum and regular activities of the classroom. However, a guidance program of this nature does little to make certain that each child will be provided his or her fair share of continuous high-quality guidance assistance geared to their specific stage of development. This type of program only works when classes are small and homogeneous in their make-up.

A more common model today is similar to that found in Figure 2. Here the staff is assisted by one or more counselors working with other members of the pupil personnel team, especially when helping teachers with more difficult or time-consuming cases and the principal with administration and evaluation of the program. More often than not, the teachers in this approach assume less and less responsibility for guidance of their pupils over the years and the counselors eventually become the guidance program. In order to

prevent this from happening and to promote maximum efficiency as well as productivity, the teacher-advisor approach is now widely used in middle schools.

FIGURE 2
THE GUIDANCE TEAM



The Classroom Teacher in the Guidance Program

The press for better management of guidance programs has caused a return to greater use of classroom teachers as a primary source of guidance assistance for students in both elementary and secondary schools, and it is interesting to note that the leadership for this movement came from middle schools.

The teacher-counselor concept, now usually referred to as either the teacher-advisor or the teacher-guide system, is not entirely new. Its roots are firmly established in guidance programs of the past. As recently as a generation ago classroom teachers were expected to provide most of the guidance services for pupils in elementary and junior high schools. The main reason for their use at that time was a shortage of trained counselors. Because partially trained teachers were being asked to do the work of fully trained counselors, there was considerable dissatisfaction with the arrangement. Rapid steps were taken to change this condition as soon as a larger supply of qualified counselors became available during and following the National Defense Education Act of 1958.

Today, the practice of using classroom teachers as guidance workers is again increasing in popularity -- but for a different reason. Hiring full-time counselors has not proved to be the best way of providing all the guidance services needed by every student. In short, the rush to hire counselors to do the counseling led many schools to discontinue utilization of teachers as guidance workers in any capacity. Now we realize that both teachers and counselors have distinct guidance roles to perform which each is in a better position to execute than the other.

Having recognized this mistake, more and more school systems across the nation are redefining the function of classroom teachers to include emphasis upon the provision of those guidance services which they can provide for their pupils. At that same time, both pre-service and in-service training programs are being developed to help teachers become fully qualified to offer them. The middle school movement, with its stress upon individualizing instruction, facilitating the total growth and development of pupils, and humanizing the learning process, has been a major force giving strength to this new trend.

Since the primary purpose of the middle school guidance program is to facilitate the learning process, it is natural for the classroom teacher to have an important part to play. Even in schools employing counselors, it is neither logical nor practical to exclude teachers from the guidance program for there are many aspects of guidance which can be carried out either more efficiently or more effectively by them.

There are several reasons why this is so. First, the teacher spends a great deal of time with certain children each day and is in a good position to develop the kind of personal relationship with his or her pupils that is essential for implementing sound guidance practices. Second, because teachers have the same students each day, they are in a better physical location to provide guidance on a regular systematic basis. Finally, many guidance activities are better carried out within the context of related subject matter and learning activities of the classroom. This is not to say that guidance and teaching are synonymous; but rather, that the unique function of each enhances the other.

The Teacher-Advisor Program

The teacher-advisor program is not intended to be a substitute for the school counselor. Nor is it designed as a replacement for guidance which has become a traditional part of regular classroom activities. Rather, it is intended to provide greater emphasis upon the guidance function of the school through a well-defined structure for group guidance activities which can be specifically defined, assigned, and evaluated, thus assuring that every child will be provided his or her fair share of guidance services at the time they are most needed. Without this more intensive organization guidance becomes an incidental part of the total school program and many children who need the help are overlooked.

The main objective of the teacher-advisor arrangement is to guarantee that for each child in the school there is an adult professional staff member who knows that pupil well and is in a position to continuously monitor his or her growth and development.

To accomplish this it is essential that only a small number of advisees be assigned to available staff members. It is easy to see that there can never be enough counselors per se. The whole student body must be divided among the entire staff, including administrators and counselors as well as classroom teachers. Such an arrangement usually makes it possible to limit each TA group to no more than twenty pupils, a reasonable number for each advisor to know and monitor. If all teachers cannot participate the first year, then the usual practice is to start with the lowest grade level and include the upper levels during the succeeding years.

Any guidance activity that is judged worthwhile must have time provided for it. The amount of time required depends upon how well the staff is prepared. As mentioned in a later section, teachers must have clearly understood objectives, related materials, and the necessary skills. Success in implementing the program is enhanced by starting with a minimum amount of time allocated for teacher-advisor meetings (say one-half hour per week) and increasing the allotted time as the demand for it by teachers and students increases. **It pays to be cautious when starting the program.** Assigned time without adequate preparation can cause the program to regress to the ineffective homerooms of decades ago. During the first year or so short weekly staff meetings to go over the objectives and materials to be used during the following week builds confidence in the teacher-advisors that they will do a good job and helps maintain the high morale necessary for success of the program.

As pointed out earlier, the teacher-advisor program does not reduce the need for qualified counselors. In fact, it is more likely to increase the demand for their services since the counseling needs of each pupil are being more carefully assessed. Obviously the duties of the counselors do change as the teacher-advisors assume more of the guidance tasks that require little additional training and refer to the counselors more complex and time-consuming cases which they have discovered. In addition, leadership and in-service training for the teacher-advisor program falls naturally into the domain of the counselor though all are not immediately comfortable with this role.

Teacher-Advisor Activities

The areas of guidance in which the classroom teachers and teacher-advisors have a significant role to play include: career development, educational planning, collaboration with parents, social development, and general school adjustment. In order to provide these, the **teacher-advisor** engages most often in the following activities:

1. Counseling in those cases where both the nature of the problem and the assistance required are within the training and experience of the teacher.
2. Collecting data about individual students useful in helping them overcome personal factors which hinder their ability to develop in a normal manner.
3. Modifying the classroom environment of a pupil when it has been determined that certain physical, psychological, or social conditions are necessary to facilitate his or her growth and development.
4. Providing career information of all kinds, but particularly that which is related to the subject matter of the class being taught.
5. Adapting instructional procedures and techniques to meet the unique needs of individual pupils.
6. Providing educational information concerning school requirements and regulations, course offerings related to the teacher's instructional field, extra-curricular activities, and post-secondary education.
7. Assisting with placement in part-time jobs during the school year and summer as well as full-time employment after leaving school.
8. Influencing a given student with whom the teacher has somehow been able to establish a special personal relationship.
9. Participating in a continuous evaluation of the guidance services being offered by the school.
10. Helping with the organization and administration of the guidance program, particularly the coordination of guidance services for individual students within his or her classroom.
11. Collaborating with parents as they try to help their child with physical, social, emotional, academic and vocational development.

12. Referring students to counselors and other specialists when the help they need is beyond the ability of the teacher to provide it.

Guidance Skills Needed By Teacher-Advisors

In each of the twelve areas above, teachers are in an excellent position to help students in their classes. Whether they are helpful or not depends, for the most part, upon the skills they possess. Although teachers sometimes feel inadequate in the guidance area, many already have sufficient training to work effectively with students who are in need of limited assistance. Difficult time-consuming cases do appear in all schools so well-trained counselors are also needed. However, as pointed out earlier, counselors cannot be expected to do everything, even under the best conditions.

Thus, classroom teachers must possess a number of special skills in order to satisfactorily carry out their role as a guidance worker in the classroom. These skills include the following related to:

A. **Learning about Pupils**
   1. Administering and interpreting standardized tests.
   2. Administering and interpreting non-standardized techniques.
   3. Recording data about pupils.
   4. Sharing information with others in a legal and ethical manner.
   5. Observing student behavior..

B. **Providing Information to Pupils**
   1. Vocational Information.
   2. Educational Information.
   3. Personal Information.
   4. Social Information.

C. **Counseling with Pupils and Parents**
   1. Individual interviewing techniques.
   2. Group counseling techniques.
   3. Collaborating with parents.

D. **Using Consultants**
   1. Utilizing community resources.
   2. Making referrals inside and outside the school system.

E. **Administering Guidance Services**
   1. Assisting with the definition of guidance roles of staff
   2. Becoming familiar with evaluation procedures.
   3. Providing helpful public relations activities.

4. Helping with scheduling and educational program planning.
5. Supervising para-professionals.

Guidance in Groups

A basic characteristic of **developmental** guidance programs is the utilization of student groups. Many guidance services can be offered by this means; thus, it is important that classroom teachers involve those groups of students already a natural part of the school structure to provide guidance services. There are several advantages. Better use can be made of time, physical facilities and school personnel. In addition, the group itself has characteristics which are helpful in nature. It can provide individual pupils with a supportive relationship based upon knowledge gained in the group sessions that many of their peers are concerned about the same problems and are using similar methods of resolving them. In the latter case, the group often provides an excellent testing ground in which young people may safely try out new kinds of behavior. Employing group procedures is also an excellent means of facilitating individual counseling offered to participants. By this method, large numbers of pupils can also be made aware of the guidance services that are available to them and how they might make use of them. It should be pointed out, however, that group techniques are not a substitute for individual counseling. They are an excellent method of supplementing individual counseling and often increase the demand for such help.

Group Activities in the Guidance Program

Getting groups together during school time to discuss a common problem is not an easy task. Many class schedules make it difficult for either teachers or pupils to free themselves at a particular time for a special meeting. A teacher-advisor program provides regularly scheduled time for group meetings. In addition, there already exists within the present structure of most middle schools a number of opportunities for extending guidance services to pupils in groups beyond regular classes or teacher-advisor groups. Some of the more common ones are listed below.

1. **Special Clubs** -- Clubs formed because of the expressed interest of pupils in such things as music, art and science are ready-made vehicles for providing guidance services to their members. Such groups are an excellent means of helping children acquire new knowledge and skills by capitalizing on the high degree of interest and motivation held by members.

2. **Student Government** -- Student councils and other forms of governing bodies, whether they operate within a single classroom or throughout the entire building, provide the guidance worker with many opportunities for encouraging students to analyze and act upon social problems with which they are confronted in their daily lives.

3. **Special Classes** -- Occasionally, special classes such as those in career education, health, techniques of studying, physical education or certain subject matter areas are offered for students who have special interests or are seeking assistance in problem areas not ordinarily covered in the regular school program.

4. **School Assemblies** -- Assembly meetings are accepted activities in most middle schools. They offer any number of opportunities for providing children with information about the school, themselves and the world of work.

5. **Camping Programs** -- Some schools have their own camping programs maintained both during the summer and regular school year. In others, national organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Red Cross, have been instrumental in setting up group guidance programs that operate in conjunction with schools.

6. **School Newspaper** -- Supporting a school newspaper published for and by the pupils has a number of guidance possibilities. Not only does it provide an opportunity to work closely with the students who are responsible for gathering and writing the news, but it furnishes the teacher or counselor with an effective means of distributing guidance information throughout the entire student body.

7. **School Library** -- School librarians have many opportunities to work with children in small groups. When their activities are coordinated with those of the regular classroom teacher and the counselors, they can become one of the most important members of the guidance team.

Preparing Teachers as Guidance Workers

Most classroom teachers like the idea of taking an active part in the guidance program. For them a major reason for choosing their

profession was the satisfaction that comes from helping young people. However, a troublesome aspect of implementing a teacher-advisor program is the in-service training needed by the teachers.

The degree to which acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills is of concern to teachers on the job is heightened by the fact that the skills must be applied at the very time they are being learned. However, it is also true that under these somewhat stressful conditions it is easier to identify the troublesome areas and to devise suitable in-service programs for correcting them. The four most common problem areas in the in-service training of classroom teachers for their role in the guidance program are helping them: (1) select a common approach (philosophy) to guidance for their school's program from among the many that currently exist, (2) balance their teaching activities with those devoted to guidance, (3) form an effective guidance team with the counselors in their school, and (4) overcome normal forms of personal resistance to implementing their new role.

Choosing a Philosophy

In order for teachers to adequately carry out their guidance role in a school, there must be agreement by the entire staff as to what the general goal of the guidance program itself will be. The overall aim must be consistent with both the stated goals of the school and expectations of the students and their parents. Selecting the most suitable approach for a middle school is usually not as easy as it may seem. There are currently at least four major categories to choose from: (1) those that stress selection and preparation for a vocation, (2) those that emphasize crisis intervention and problem solving, (3) those that stress humanism and humanitarian acts in all programs and activities of the school, and (4) those that promote a specific area of human development.

The task is made no less difficult by the fact that the best philosophical approach for a given school usually includes something from each of the four general areas. Thus, it is important that an in-service training program provide teachers not only with a comprehensive knowledge of the various philosophies of guidance found in middle schools today but, in addition, with preparation both to systematically assess the needs of their students and to reach agreement among themselves on the approach to guidance which is most appropriate for their school.

Balancing Teaching and Guidance

It is easy for some teachers to become too enthusiastic about their role as a guidance worker. They are often heard to say: "My job

is to be a counselor for my children" If this is so, who will be the child's teacher?

The most suitable apportionment of time allocated by the classroom teacher to teaching and to guidance is as difficult to determine for a specific classroom or school as it is to maintain. Many forces are at work, sometimes encouraging the teacher to spend more time on instructional activities and sometimes more on guidance. For instance, the desires of individual students are often in conflict with those of society in general. The priorities of a local school are sometimes different from those of the larger governmental unit in which it operates. Children and their parents do not always agree; and finally, there is the question to be answered in every school as to whether students should be encouraged to make decisions regarding their life goals on the basis of reality as their elders see it or on their own dreams for the future. Support for the teachers in maintaining a satisfactory balance is provided by the underlying philosophy and organization of the guidance program in each school.

Forming an Effective Teacher-Counselor Team

All too often classroom teachers envy or even resent school counselors. This is because they can see the possibility that counselors will take from them that part of teaching which they enjoy the most --- helping students grow and develop.

Throughout the United States another aspect has contributed to the teacher's envy of school counselors. Very rapid growth of guidance programs during the thirty year period from 1958-1988 placed the counselors in the educational spotlight where attention was continually drawn to their concern for the welfare of individual students and away from the same concern held by teachers and administrators. The effect was that teachers were often left with the impression that they are to tend to the teaching of subject-matter while the counselors tend to the needs of students. Of course that is an impossible arrangement and, as a result, feelings of animosity developed which interfere with establishment of a good professional relationship between teachers and counselors essential for an effective guidance team.

Resisting a Guidance Role

Many teacher-advisor programs have failed simply because they were begun before the staff was ready. As was mentioned in an earlier section, most middle school teachers want a part to play in providing guidance services for pupils. However, they are naturally hesitant to participate when they are not adequately prepared. Experience with teacher-advisor programs in the United Stated has

revealed several common causes for resistance on the part of teachers which are not unreasonable nor difficult to overcome. They usually form the basis for in-service training programs. Resistance may be the result of:

1. **Lack of Understanding**
   (Teachers are hesitant because they do not understand the difference between guidance and instruction, the changing needs of students, or the way in which the guidance program can be expected to have an impact upon students and the primary function of the middle school.)
2. **Lack of Time for Guidance**
   (Most teachers already feel there is not enough time in the day even for teaching. Priorities must be realigned, and time must be set aside in the daily schedule so that all students and teachers can participate.)
3. **Lack of Sufficient Skill**
   (Special skills are required for conducting guidance and counseling activities and most teachers do not feel confident that they are adequately prepared to assume an expanded guidance role. The most common teacher-advisor skills were listed in an earlier section of this report).
4. **Lack of Suitable Material**
   (Many guidance exercises require specific kinds of information and materials, e.g., occupational information and values clarification materials. These must be prepared well in advance of their use and special training sessions in their application may be required before teacher resistance is eliminated.)
5. **Lack of Interest in Students**
   (A few teachers are just more interested in subject-matter than in students, and may always be. However, their reluctance to form a closer personal relationship with students often have other more subtle reasons such as the fear that such a relationship will cause the teacher to lose control of his or her class making it more difficult to teach.)
6. **Resentment of Counselors**
   (Where counselors are already in the school differences between their role and that of the classroom teacher are often clearly established, usually with the counselors designated as the guidance person in the school. When

the suggestion made that the teachers should assume more of a guidance role they conclude that the counselor will have less to do and, of course, resent it.)

7. **General Resistance to Change Itself**
   (All the normal excuses for not accepting a new role can also be expected. Some will say there is too little time before retirement to make worthwhile the effort to acquire new knowledge and skills. Resistance to the person advocating the new role is also quite common. Others just feel guidance is not a part of teaching so they should not be expected to get involved.)

8. **Fear that Students are Unprepared**
   (Many envision, and it is often so, that in the beginning middle school students will lack the necessary communication and problem-solving skills to successfully participate in teacher-advisor groups.)

In the last analysis, guidance services are judged as worth the time, effort, and resources they require only to the degree to which they facilitate the main goal of the middle school, helping each child with all areas of their total growth and development -academic, physical, personal and social. Foremost attention must be given to the primary function of the classroom which is to help pupils learn. Over the years many forces have been operating to divert the main thrust of the guidance program from this central purpose of the school, and the teacher-advisor movement can be viewed as a successful effort to restore guidance and counseling as an effective component of all middle schools.

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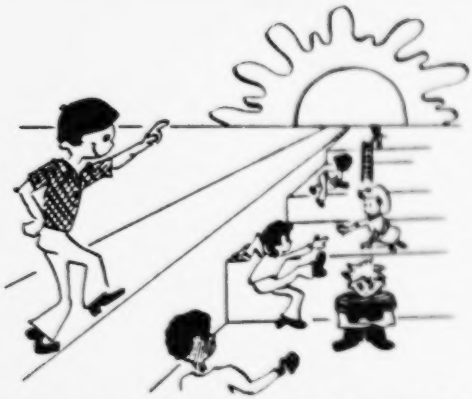

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